

Blinken green lights Israel's far right government suppression of Palestinians

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Swallowing his “concerns” that the recent wave of violence could lead to a third intifada, or uprising, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the go ahead to suppress the Palestinians as the two leaders discussed plans for operations against Iran.

Speaking at a press conference in Jerusalem after meetings Netanyahu and later with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, Blinken made the usual ritual incantations of support for a “two-state solution” meaning a mini-Palestinian statelet of isolated Bantustans subservient to Israel. This was a policy rejected decades ago by the fascistic and racist forces in Israel's newly installed government, to the extent of supporting the November 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, for signing the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Blinken all but acknowledged this and its catastrophic implications, saying “What we're seeing now for Palestinians is a shrinking horizon of hope, not an expanding one. And that, too, we believe needs to change” as he tossed some loose change —\$50 million in new American funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency that provides aid to the Palestinian refugee camps—at Abbas's feet.

Blinken said he had heard “deep concern about the current trajectory” of escalating tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. But beyond calling on Abbas to restore the PA's coordination with Israel's security services, abandoned after the Israeli massacre in Jenin, to refrain from pursuing cases against Israel in the International Criminal Court and appealing for a “de-escalation” he put forward no new proposals.

Neither did he exert any pressure on Netanyahu to rein in Israel's security forces and settlers that have killed 32 Palestinians so far this year. Far from it, he declared that “America's commitment has never wavered. It never will.”

Blinken just shrugged his shoulders, saying “It is fundamentally up to them. They have to work together to find a path forward that both defuses the current cycle of violence and, I hope, also leads to positive steps to build back some confidence.”

His de facto support—along with the silence of the major European powers—for Israel's brutal suppression of the Palestinians and its illegal occupation of their land since the 1967 Arab Israeli war is bound up with the dependence of US imperialism on Israel as the guardian of its predatory interests in the resource-rich region, and as its subcontractor in its covert war against Iran and its allies in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen—under conditions where Iran and Russia are forging ever closer relations.

Netanyahu, responding in an interview with CNN on Tuesday to a question about US concerns that expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank could exacerbate tensions, pointed to the Trump administration's brokering of the Abraham Accords. The Accords had normalized relations between Israel and several Arab countries, led to increasing military, economic and technological ties and side-lined the Palestinian issue.

He said, “I went around them (Palestinians), I went directly to the Arab states and forged with a new concept of peace... I forged four historic peace agreements, the Abraham Accords, which is twice the number of peace agreements that all my predecessors in 70 years got combined.”

Netanyahu added, “When effectively the Arab-Israeli conflict (comes) to an end, I think we'll circle back to the Palestinians and get a workable peace with the Palestinians.” By this he meant that the venal Arab bourgeois regimes would do nothing to defend the Palestinians and would be satisfied with an insincere pledge of a future settlement—in which they can “have all the powers that they need to govern themselves. But none

of the powers that could threaten (us) and this means that Israel should have the overriding security responsibility.”

Since taking office at the end of December, his government, stacked with fascists, racists and homophobes, is pursuing its coalition agreement that asserts its commitment to territorial expansionism, Jewish Supremacy and the mass repression of the Palestinians.

Netanyahu is doubling down on his government’s attacks on the Palestinians, promising to “strengthen” the settlements in response to shooting attacks in Jerusalem including a suicide attack by a lone Palestinian on a Jerusalem synagogue Friday night, in which seven Israelis were killed, and the shooting of an Israeli father and son on Saturday by a 13-year-old Palestinian.

These shootings follow a wave of violence on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, provoked by the escalating attacks over the last year by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), police and armed settlers that led to the death of 271 Palestinians, mostly in the West Bank, in 2022 and last Thursday’s massacre during a raid on the West Bank city of Jenin that left 10 Palestinians dead, the deadliest such raid in years.

There were nearly 150 violent settler attacks on Palestinians across the West Bank over the weekend. On Monday, the IDF opened fire on a car supposedly driving suspiciously, killing the driver, 26-year-old Nassim Abu Fouda, in Hebron.

Netanyahu, speaking ahead of a cabinet meeting Sunday said, “Our answer to terrorism is an iron fist and a powerful, swift and precise response.” The “iron fist” included: the immediately sealing of attackers’ family homes, over and above Israel’s longstanding practice of demolishing the houses at a later date; the revocation of Israeli residency, citizenship and national insurance rights of “families of terrorists that support terrorism and removing them to the territory of the Palestinian Authority”; easing of restrictions on Israeli civilians carrying guns; bolstering military and police units; and the confiscation of weapons from Palestinians.

Netanyahu also called for legislation to allow “the immediate dismissal of workers who have supported terrorism, without need for a hearing.” While he did not say what measures he would take to strengthen the settlements, the IDF said on Saturday it had already moved an additional battalion to the West Bank.

The new proposals have sparked concerns that they will fuel the growing violence between Israelis and Palestinians and precipitate an all-out war, with Ramadan and Passover set to coincide in April.

At the same time, the government is stoking a constitutional crisis within Israel that has aroused mass opposition, with tens of thousands taking to the streets on four successive Saturday evenings in Israel’s major cities. It plans to neuter the judicial system by curtailing the High Court’s ability to strike down laws, allowing parliament to override any such rulings, and doing away with the post of attorney general. This would pave the way to end Netanyahu’s corruption trial and facilitate more rapid settlement construction in preparation for annexing much of the West Bank.

The government is also set to introduce new legislation overturning the Supreme Court’s decision to bar ultra-Orthodox Shas Party leader Arie Dery from serving as both Interior and Health Minister. The court had ruled it “unreasonable” to appoint “a person who has been convicted three times of offenses throughout his life, and he violated his duty to serve the public loyally and lawfully while serving in senior public positions.” The legislation, if passed, will deny the court any authority to intervene in ministerial appointments.

Also planned, is the closing of Israel’s public broadcasting corporation and the muzzling of the media, restricting the publication of “sensitive information” as defined in the Privacy Protection Law. This would include “data on the personality, intimate affairs... opinions and beliefs of a person” and thus ban any opinion recorded in a conversation. This would outlaw any statement casting doubt on the credibility of a prime minister charged with corruption.

Simcha Rothman, from the fascistic Religious Zionism Party and chairman of the Knesset’s Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, has introduced legislation aimed at severely limiting workers’ right to strike in key sectors such as electricity, water, transport, health, the stock exchange and the Bank of Israel, while making any sympathy strike illegal unless approved by a secret ballot of the union’s members in which at least half the members voted.



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